

The bundle with the dish is to be carried for one year by the one to whom it is given. At each meal eaten by the one carrying it, either in his own home or as a guest elsewhere, food of each kind served at the meal is placed on the dish. The dish is filled with food, therefore, just as it would be if it were being used by the person for whom it was being carried.<sup>7</sup>

For one year following the death of a partner, the widow or widower is not permitted to marry. In the early day a widow in mourning busied herself making articles of clothing, such as moccasins, beaded shirts, and other forms of clothing worn by men, enough to enable a man to change clothing once. At the end of a year the dish and the clothing she had made were brought to a feast at which all the dignitaries of the *Mide wiwin* and of the tribe assembled. At the feast these men presented her to the brother of her husband to whom she then gave all the clothing she had made. In the absence of a brother the clothing was given to a member of the gens to which the deceased had belonged.<sup>8</sup> Marriage was also encouraged with a man who belonged to the deceased husband's gens. I might say here that it was against the custom of the people to marry someone of one's own gens; the relationship of members of a gens was that of brother and sister. They were not blood relatives, however.

At the end of the year of mourning the woman is free to do as she pleases about her future. Today many of our Indians still adhere to some of the old customs and traditions, but they no longer recognize the gens as a prohibition for marriage. A woman, therefore, may marry anyone whom she wishes, except such as the State law forbids her to marry.

SISTER M. INEZ HILGER

ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA

#### AN INDIAN TRADITION RELATING TO THE MASTODON

In the light of archeological discoveries made during the last two decades there can scarcely be any doubt concerning the contemporaneity of man with the horse, ground-sloth, camel, mastodon, and mammoth through, at least, the greater part of North and South America. The evidence indicates that the last of these mammals to become extinct was the mammoth. There is even a possibility that in certain parts of the country the mammoth may have lingered on up to as recently as five hundred years ago.<sup>1</sup> How-

<sup>7</sup> Today the bundle generally consists only of a dish wrapped in cloth (*wiwapidjigan*). The bundle is unwrapped wherever the carrier eats a meal. Food is placed on the dish and at the end of the meal it is eaten by someone present other than the carrier. Sometimes only an unwrapped dish is carried (*onakan*). Often a few hairs of the deceased were also carried in the bundle with the dish. At the feast given at the end of the year of mourning, the taboos regarding participating in seasonal occupations were lifted. Mourners again braided their hair and dressed with care. The name of the deceased was never again pronounced.

<sup>8</sup> Gentes (*dodam*) were exogamic. Members treated each other as brothers and sisters. Each gens was designated and perpetuated by some animal.

<sup>1</sup> In several conversations with the writer, Professor William Berryman Scott, the doyen of American paleontologists, has given it as his opinion that, had the first of the Spanish discoverers of America penetrated into the interior, it is quite possible that they might have met with the living mammoth. Another distinguished American paleontologist (whose special interest is the horse) is, I understand, of the opinion that the horse never became extinct in America. The argu-

ever this may be, a critical examination of Indian myths and traditions relating to giant mammals has led Strong to the considered view that these represent "historical traditions" based on fact "rather than mere 'myths of observation' or recent Caucasian introductions."<sup>2</sup> This conclusion has, I think, been generally accepted.

The traditions thus far examined relate principally to the mammoth. Recently I came across what is perhaps the earliest record of an Indian tradition concerning an extinct mammal, the suggestion being that it was the memory of the mastodon that was preserved in this tradition.

It was Robert Koch, the first systematic fossil hunter in this country and the first discoverer of human artifacts in association with the remains of extinct mammals, namely, the ground sloth *Myodon harlani* and the mastodon *Mastodon americanus*, who published what is perhaps the earliest account of such a tradition. The first discovery referred to was made in October, 1838, near the Burboise River, in Gasconade County, Missouri, the second discovery being made in late March, 1840, near the shore of the river Pomme de Terre, in Benton County, Missouri.

Koch published an unsigned account of his first discovery in *The Presbyterian*, a weekly newspaper published at Philadelphia. He took the fossil bones to be those of a mammoth and under that name published his account of the skeletal remains,<sup>3</sup> but as I have elsewhere shown the remains he describes are clearly those of the ground sloth *Myodon harlani*.

The mastodon was a great find, and in almost perfect condition. Koch at once hit upon the idea of exhibiting it to the public, and for this purpose he wrote a descriptive pamphlet of his find, calling the animal the "Missourium," and adding an account of "Indian Traditions." This was published in 1841.<sup>4</sup> The account of the "Indian Traditions" occurs on pages 10-12, and is as follows:

#### INDIAN TRADITIONS

It is perfectly true that we cannot, with any degree of certainty, depend on Indian traditions; but it is equally true, that generally these traditions are founded on events which have actually transpired, and according to their importance in relation to the welfare of the aborigines among whom they occurred, and in the absence of any better method of perpetuating them, are trans-

ment is that the horse is a slow breeder, and that its enormous increase in so short a time in the post-Columbian period suggests that while the horse became an Indian domestic animal only after the Indian had learned its use from the Europeans, the stock drawn upon was primarily the native American horse.

<sup>2</sup> W. D. Strong, *North American Indian Traditions Suggesting a Knowledge of the Mammoth* (AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, vol. 36, 1934), pp. 81-88.

<sup>3</sup> For an account and discussion of Koch and his discoveries see M. F. Ashley Montagu and C. Bernard Petersen, *The Earliest Account of the Association of Human Artifacts with Fossil Mammals in North America* (Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 87, 1944), pp. 407-419. See also M. F. Ashley Montagu, *The Earliest Account of the Association of Human Artifacts With Fossil Mammals in North America* (Science, vol. 95, 1942), pp. 380-381.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Koch, *Description of the Missourium, or Missouri Leviathan; Together with its supposed habits, Indian Traditions concerning the Location from whence it was exhumed; Also, Comparisons of the Whale, Crocodile and Missourium, with the Leviathan, As described in the 41st chapter of the Book of Job*. St. Louis, 1841. The date printed on the cover of the pamphlet is "1840," the date on the title-page is "1841."

mitted with great care in their legends from generation to generation; but in the course of time, as might reasonably be expected, these traditions lose much in correctness and minuteness of detail, owing to the circumstances, more or less, in which the tribes have been placed. As I am constrained to confine my remarks within very circumscribed limits, I will only relate one of the traditions having reference to the existence of the before described animal: this one, however, led principally to its discovery.

At the time when the first white settlers emigrated to the Osage country (as this section of territory is usually called), it was inhabited by the Osage Indians, and the river by which it is watered was called the Big Bone river, owing to a tradition preserved by them, which they stated as follows:

There was a time when the Indians paddled their canoes over the now extensive prairies of Missouri, and encamped or hunted on the bluffs. (These bluffs vary from 50 to 400 feet in perpendicular height.) That at a certain period many large and monstrous animals came from the eastward, along and up the Mississippi and Missouri rivers; upon which the animals which had previously occupied the country became very angry, and at last so enraged and infuriated, by reason of these intrusions, that the red man durst not venture out to hunt any more, and was consequently reduced to great distress. At this time a large number of these huge monsters assembled here, when a terrible battle ensued, in which many on both sides were killed, and the remainder resumed their march towards the setting sun. Near the bluffs which are at present known by the name of the Rocky Ridge, one of the greatest of these battles was fought. Immediately after the battle, the Indians gathered together many of the slaughtered animals, and offered them on the spot as a burnt-sacrifice to the Great Spirit; the remainder were buried by the Great Spirit himself in the before mentioned Pomme de Terre, which from this time took the name of the Big Bone river, as well as the Osage, of which the Pomme de Terre is a branch. From this time the Indians brought their yearly sacrifice to this place, and offered it up to the Great Spirit as a thank-offering for their timely deliverance; and more latterly, they have offered their sacrifices on the table rock previously mentioned, which was held in great veneration, and considered holy ground.

This ceremony was kept up with the utmost rigidity until one of the white emigrants settled in the valley at the foot of the rock, with the intention of making himself and family a permanent residence on this fertile spot; but he did not long enjoy this beautiful situation, for on the return of the Indians to offer their wonted sacrifice, they beheld with indignation and astonishment the intrusion of this venturesome settler on their sacred ground. Soon the council fire was kindled, when the Indians gave their accustomed murmur of dissatisfaction, and immediately the white man was obliged to leave, without the least preliminary ceremony. Some time after this, on becoming better acquainted with his red neighbors, and having through much perseverance gained their good opinion, after much reluctance on their part, and explanations and assurances that he would not infringe on their sacred privileges, and would only raise corn and potatoes for his family, he was once more permitted to settle on this sacred spot, of which he retained peaceable possession until the return of some old chiefs, who had been for a long time absent. They in turn were exasperated to madness on seeing the violation of the sacred ground of their forefathers by the encroachment of the white man, and again the poor farmer was obliged to leave. From that time this spot remained in the hands of the Indians, and no entreaty or allurements could be held out to induce them to resign it, until they were removed by the government; it then for the third time fell into the hands of the original settler, who joyfully took possession of the place he had so long desired to make his home.

After a while other settlers arrived, and as the want of a mill for grinding their different kinds of grain began to be felt—each family having hitherto been obliged, in order to obtain a supply of meal, to resort to the laborious process of pounding their corn in mortars—the old farmer resolved on building a tub-mill for the accommodation of himself and his neighbors. In order to procure

the necessary water power, the aid of the before mentioned spring was brought into requisition; and in making the necessary excavation, the laborers found several bones of young mastodons, which excited their curiosity and astonishment, but they suspended their labor on ascertaining that the force of said spring was not sufficient for their purpose. Soon after this the place was sold, and the excitement about the bones and the Indians was forgotten until the summer of 1839, at which time a young man, who was employed to clean said spring, found a tooth of a mastodon during his labor, which occurrence reminded several of the old settlers of the former transactions and traditions, and a narration of these induced a few persons residing in that vicinity, out of mere curiosity, to make further examination as to what was contained in the spring. They succeeded in finding several bones and teeth; but the mud and water accumulated so fast, they soon became discouraged with the difficulties attending the search, and gave it over. Some of these facts came to my knowledge in March, 1840, on my return to St. Louis from an excursion to the south-western part of the country, when I immediately repaired to the spot, and found the facts as I have here stated.

M. F. ASHLEY MONTAGU

HAHNEMANN MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL

#### MEKEEL TO COLLIER

Mr. John Collier, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, has written an ingenious reply to my article, *An Appraisal of the Indian Reorganization Act*.<sup>1</sup> I am sorry that Mr. Collier saw fit to ignore both the major implications of the article and the spirit in which it was written. As he well knows, I have supported his major objectives both while I was associated with him and since.

I prefer to let the matter rest until there is a thorough review of the working out of the Indian Reorganization Act on the various reservations. Then it will be possible to determine whether or not my article is "crowded with factual inaccuracies" and "errors." However, at this time I should like to state that I took the usual precaution of having the manuscript checked by outside sources before it was submitted for publication. Meanwhile, if anyone has legitimate use for my comments on the points specifically raised by Mr. Collier, I shall be glad to give them by correspondence.

SCUDDER MEKEEL

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

#### GILBERT ISLAND HORTICULTURE

The only food plant cultivated by the Gilbert Islanders is the bobai, a local variety of taro. A starch obtained from the tuberous root of this plant is a major staple with these people. In economic importance locally the bobai is second only to the coconut as a source of vegetable food.

The local importance of the bobai is due to its ability to grow and mature in the brackish waters of the coral atoll islets. In this respect it is unique among the

<sup>1</sup> Scudder Mekeel, *An Appraisal of the Indian Reorganization Act*. AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST Vol. 46, No. 2, 1944), pp. 209-217.

John Collier, *Collier Replies to Mekeel* (AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST Vol. 46, No. 3, 1944), pp. 422-426.